BEZANGO, WA 985
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So I'm getting my quarterly haircut at Kim Kwon's Kwazy Kuts (sign on door: "Where Appointments Are Not Always Necessary") when I look outside and see three Wild Russian Boars trotting down the sidewalk. These animals are the size of a sofa, covered in coarse black hair, and have huge tusks. They are not cuddly. They are not friendly. Whenever they trot through our town, people clear the streets and run inside.

How they got here is something of a mystery, but apparently they have been around Southwest Washington for several decades.

We are used to seeing them now. It seems strange that only a year ago I was sitting in this same barber chair, with Kim cutting my hair and asking me to marry her for the 99th time (more on that story in the next round), when in ran Swiggy Snacklebee. He was sort of an excitable type and prone to exaggeration. For example, Swiggy was the Vice-Chair of the Bezango Y2K Impact Association. He filled his old nuclear fallout bomb shelter, originally built in 1962, with nothing but toilet paper. Anyway, Swiggy ran in Kim Kwon's Kwazy Kuts ("Where Appointments Are Not Always Necessary") , panting, and ranting about giant hairy tusky pigs chasing him.

Just at that moment, one of the beasts showed up behind him in the open door. Kim reached under her barber smock and pulled out a fully loaded crossbow and killed it on the spot. I suppose that scenario sounds rather odd, but you wouldn't think so if you knew Kim like we do. Anyway, she now has that boar stuffed and on display, along with five others she killed in her shop since then.

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Thomas Nixon teaches science at Homer T. Bone High School. The students call him "Tommy Test Tube" behind his back.

Mr. Nixon believes in and teaches a number of conspiracy theories as fact. His students learn the Moon landings were all faked. Elvis is still alive. Vampires really exist. The "Oriental Alphabet" tells the story of the Bible. And so on.

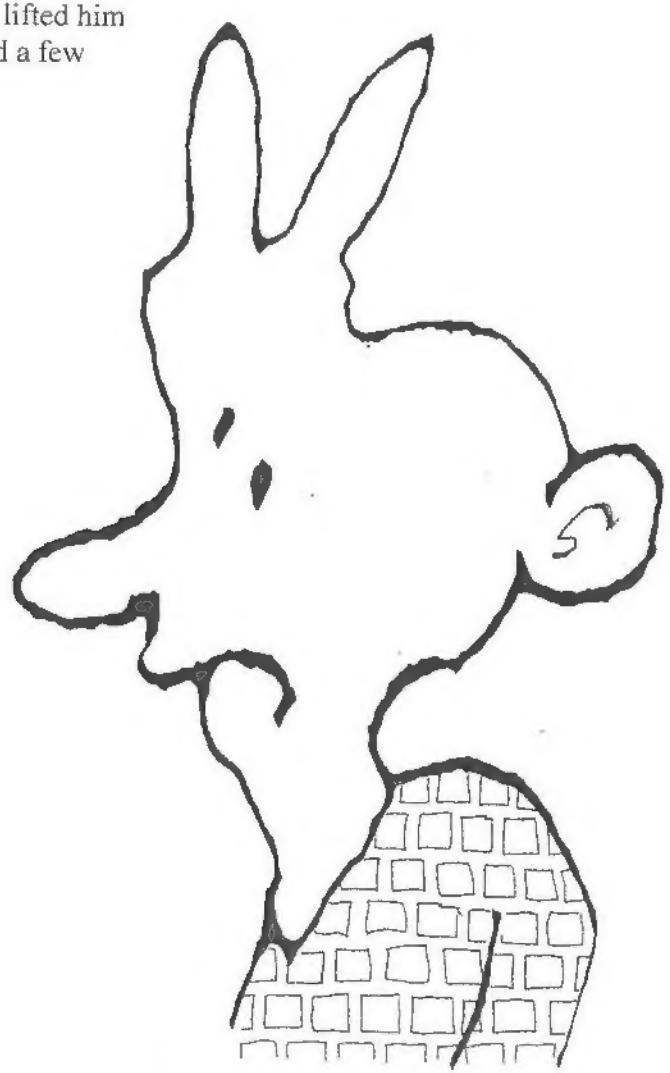
When the Wild Russian Boars began to become part of the Bezango scenery, he developed a very unique theory regarding their origin. They are, he says, the physical manifestation of Chinese dreams. The boars only show up at certain times of the day. This is due to the fact that people in China are sleeping at that hour and their dreams travel through the earth. These dreams emerge on the other side in Bezango, at Ratlipp's Hole at the edge of town. And there they take the form of the Wild Russian Boars. Once the Chinese awake, the boars return to the hole and hence to China as they vaporize back to dormant thoughts. If you cross-examine him about this, he'll raise his hands in exasperation and say he can't explain this fully to mere laypeople.

Oh, I almost forgot. Mr. Nixon also has a large collection of what he says are Sasquatch droppings. Or Bigfoot, as the Californians call it.

Personally, I enjoy keeping an open mind about topics like ghosts and UFOs because it tickles the imagination. I know, I know, it is almost redundant to say I live in Bezango and I study the paranormal. But for some, like Grover Googybugg, skepticism itself has become a close-minded religious doctrine. Especially the subject of Sasquatch. "People should forget this nonsense and mind their own business," he'll tell you.



Another weird Bezango creature story concerns Dean "Bunny" Borker. He lives next door to that old WPPSS nuclear power plant the State turned on and forgot about. That place was built by drunk Oregon contractors, and the Mystik Criver is not big enough to really cool it down. Plus, several Bezango earthquakes have loosened it up a bit. But I digress. "Bunny" is a little guy, and birds of prey are constantly swooping down and grabbing his head, and attempt to lift him away. A few big eagles and Alaska Snowy Owls have actually lifted him off the ground a few feet!



Eltopay Flemm was the Chair of the Bezango Y2K Impact Association. We saw a lot of him in 1999. He showed up at every City Council meeting during that year and tried to get the town mobilized for the coming disaster. Fortunately, our Council is filled with incompetent office holders and nothing was done, so no resources were wasted. It wasn't wisdom on their part though, it was inertia. That's probably a key to their political success.

Eltopay has not been seen in public very much since Jan. 1, 2000. He did build a lighthouse on the hill, right behind the bulldozer forest of Robert Frost McGee. Although you can see the Pacific Ocean from the highest points of the surrounding woods, we are still too far inland to have a lighthouse be of any use to sea vessels.

Someone told me he built the thing as a preparation for when the 500-year earthquake (which last hit in 1700) takes place, and Bezango will suddenly find itself becoming a port city. I think it was Swiggy who passed that on, so take it for what it is worth.

As if the above mentioned facts were not odd enough, during the few times we see Eltopay in public these days, he is always followed by a large group of little guys. They all stand below 28 inches tall, and wear pointy hats and have pointy toes on their slipper-like shoes. Most of them have long white beards. Aside from always being with Eltopay, the only other time we see them is when one of them rips through town on the back of a highly agitated Wild Russian Boar, riding it bronco style.

We do have mysteries in town that are a bit more earthly. This sweet looking lady is also known as the "Cookie Widow." I have lost count on the number of times she has been widowed, but I believe she is now in the double-digit range. She uses all her former married names, and the last I knew her full name was Edith Marie Flemm McGee Googybugg-[2] Sneedmoss Ratlipp Borker Waters-[2] Uberflumpf Thiessen-[3] Bricker Dragon Gorch Hands Nixon McElfresh Peabody Moop. But that was several husbands ago. She uses the bracketed numbers to indicate the number of times she has had that surname.

The word is that she lures potential husbands with her fine cooking, particularly her incredible cookies, and then serves them a real killer batch shortly after the vows. Literally.

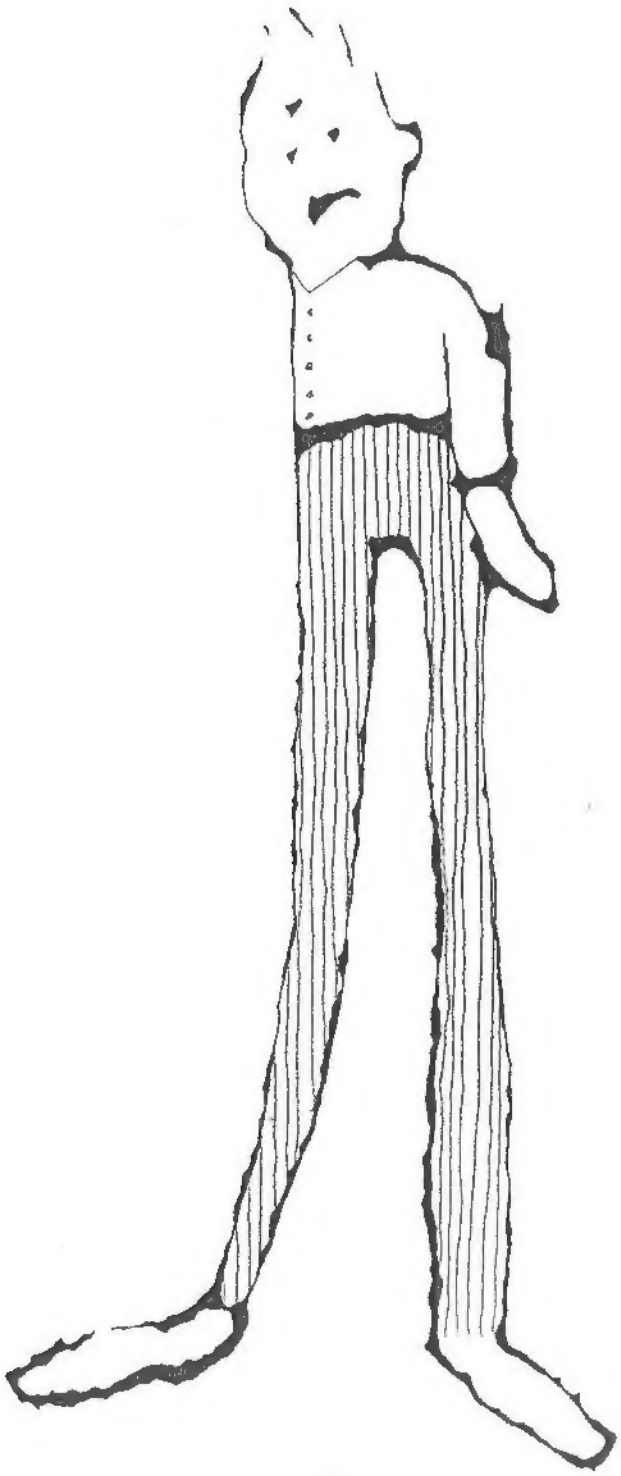
Several years ago she opened a bakery. I think it was the middle spot in the three storefront strip mall. It was patronized only by tourists. Some wise-acre guerilla artist, probably Emily Dickinson Moop, painted a big sandwich board sign and left it in front of the bakery. It read: "Cookies to Die For!" Edith didn't get the joke and left it there, but we all got a big kick out of it.

Did I say only tourists went to her bakery? Forgive me, I forgot about Uriah Peabody. He bought a box of her cookies on Tuesday and was dead on Wednesday.

Uriah lived alone. His house had a big sign on the living room window that is pretty hard to read these days, but if you look real close you can still make out the message "Impeach Earl Warren." Several law enforcement officers and neighbors were injured by his numerous booby-traps as they entered his house to see if he was OK.

Upstairs and in the basement they found thousands of rounds of ammunition, mortar shells, napalm, hand grenades, and a vast arsenal of automatic weapons. Yet he was done in by a cookie. Well, probably.

Also, his old nuclear fallout bomb shelter, originally built in 1962, was filled with toilet paper. Come to think of it, there are a lot of old nuclear fallout bomb shelters originally built in in 1962 in Bezango, and all of them are filled with toilet paper. I guess that is bad news for our current merchants trying to sell new toilet paper. I guess you could say the bottom fell out of that market. BwaaaaaaaahahahHAHAHAHA!! Sorry. Couldn't resist.





Snoodle B. Clapsaddle is a newcomer to Bezango. His family lived for generations on a shallow and sandy island at the mouth of the Columbia River. At high tide, the entire island would be under the River. In what should be considered a good study in evolutionary genetics, the great-great grandchildren of the original settler were born with stilt-style legs to enable them to stay above the water line at all times. Snoodle looks to be about 12 feet tall.

The political jurisdiction of Clapsaddle Island has always been a major problem. Neither Washington or Oregon wanted it. The Clapsaddles took advantage of the situation and had their own nation for 150 years. Bet you never heard about that in your history class, eh? Not only was the sovereign country of Clapsaddle a totally independent entity, but they were also a nuclear power.

So one day the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers unknowingly dredged Clapsaddle Island out of existence, and the Clapsaddles diffused throughout the Pacific Northwest. Snoodle got lost on his way to Cosmopolis and fumbled into our town. And he stayed. Since Snoodle served as the Minister of Defense for his island nation, we can only imagine what we'll find in **his** attic and basement when he passes on.

Some mysteries are more mundane and commonplace than others, but that doesn't make them less of a mystery. Consider the case of M.T. Hands. This real estate guy was always known as a dork. We all liked him, I mean, whenever he went by we'd say, "There's goes that dork." In a friendly way, of course. We knew he couldn't help it.

His big real estate claim to fame was taking a five acre forested hill, clearcutting it to the point where not a single tree was left, and then advertise it as a housing development called "Evergreen Heights." We all enjoyed that one, but to this day he doesn't see the joke. Like I said. A dork.

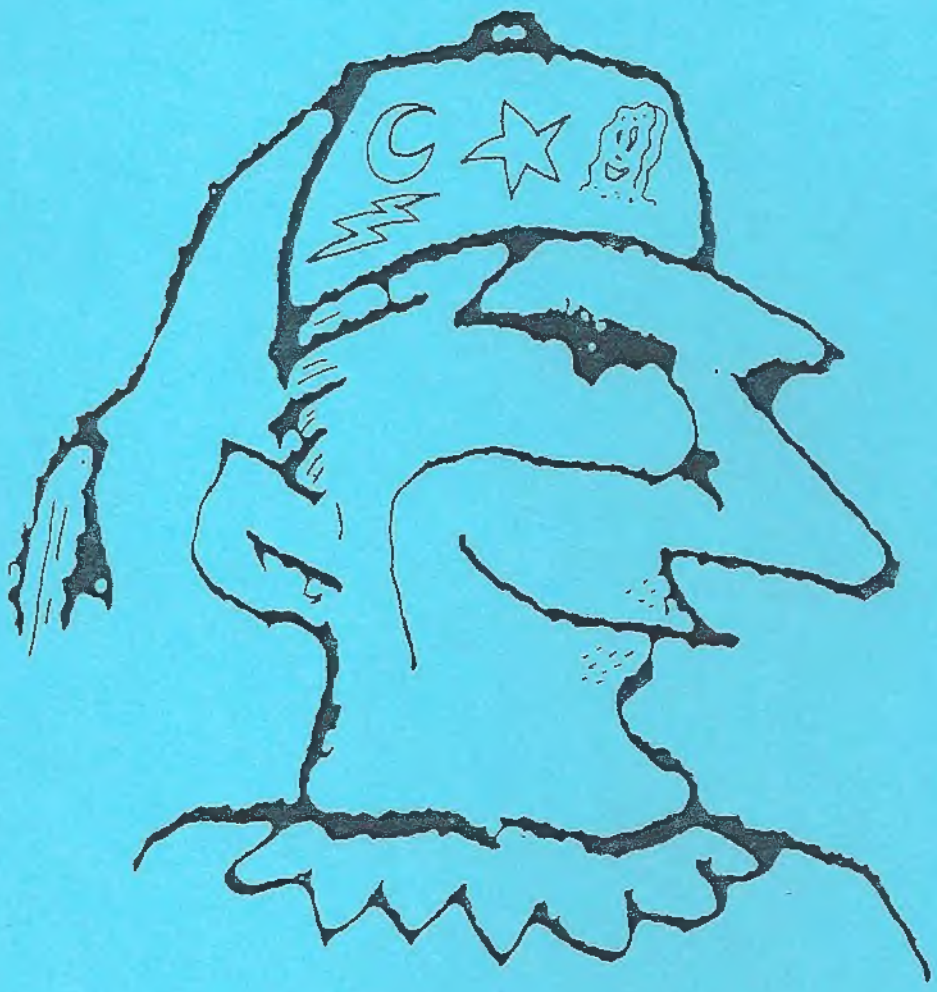
Anyway, when he hit his late 40s, he deserted his wife and three kids and went through what many call a "Mid-Life Crisis." He wanted to redefine himself, so Kim Kwon gave him a perm, he changed his wardrobe, and bought a snazzy new sports car. But he made the mistake of remaining in Bezango. Now when he passes we say, "There goes that dork with his perm and new clothes in a snazzy new sports car."

I keep trying to get Kim Kwon to propose to him instead of me, but she says "What? Are you nuts? The guy's a dork!"

And here's another little mystery. Sherrie Thiessen drives like a maniac during what passes for Bezango's morning rush hour. Her hair is wet, and she has one hand on the steering wheel and in her other hand is her cell phone. We see this every morning.

Two points to mention. First, she doesn't have a job. Second, Bezango sits in a natural bowl, and no cell tower signals can reach us.

Go figure.



Maurice McElfresh belongs to a secret society that is so secret none of the members know each other, or the name of the society, or the purpose of the group's existence, or when and where they are supposed to meet. But at least he has a fez.